

Ain't Nuffin Like the Old School

Do you remember black light posters? MerchDirect does and has manufactured black light posters for the pop rock band **Brand New**. Tepper states, "While these were on the wall of every kid in the '70s there are not too many bands that still sell them. The hardest part was finding someone to produce them, since our screen printing equipment is not set up for these types of posters. The combination of the felt and black light ink makes for a product that is not the "greenest" from a manufacturing standpoint, which is probably part of the reason that there was one place in the whole country that still prints them."

Speaking of retro items, do people still use car air-fresheners? Apparently, the **Tiki Cowboys**, a Chicago-based trio that play a blend of country, blues and Island music, do. They have created the T-Key car air-freshener. Percussionist and ukulele player **Eric "Baron" Behrenfeld** remarks, "I was looking for

something, besides a sticker, that would have lasting impact and be a constant reminder about the band. I wanted something that had a "tiki" or island vibe to it. The coconut scent was perfect with the band logo. I thought that car air-fresheners tend to stay hanging a long time in cars, so other people could see it too when the car is parked or when people ride with the driver. When someone asks about it, that is a band promo moment! I send them out with our CDs. And, the 'T-Keys' are easy to have on hand. I keep them in my car, trap case, work bag, and so forth. They work better than a business card. Everyone loves them when they get one. Plus they were just over a \$1 each to make, so they're a great bang for the buck."

While it is difficult to track what effect an item like this might have on a band's fan base, Behrenfeld is optimistic. "Just seeing people smile when I hand them a T-Key is worth the effort. I know as a 'leave-behind' it is getting impressions out there for the band. What I am trying to do is create a 'brand' for the band. By having the Tiki Cowboy image out on the air-fresheners, stickers and flyers, it acts as a continual reinforcer of the band's identity."

No discussion about old-school merch would be complete without **Jack White** and his various bands. White is known for being suspicious of technology, and that love of the traditional way of playing and recording music translates to his love of throwback band merchandise. Tannis Root does the tour merch for both **the White Stripes** and **the Raconteurs**. According to Mooney, "For the Raconteurs, he [White] produced a Stylophone which is like a portable synthesizer. You use a pen to create the tones on the keyboard. It's a special Raconteurs customized keyboard. The White Stripes have produced cameras [JACK Holga and MEG Diana+ analog cameras in their trademark red, white, black and peppermint colors]. They produced a miniature turntable in Japan, a set of miniature records

DO A LITTLE BUSINESS ON THE SIDE

Not content to just sell branded items at their shows, some artists are finding their inner entrepreneur and selling all sorts of unexpected products at their shows and on their websites.

- A Nashville based, indie/pop songstress, **Marie Hines** is also known as the "Cupcake Queen," given her predilection for selling cupcakes at her shows. Hines states, "I've been selling the cupcakes at shows for about a year now. They sell very well. People don't expect to see cupcakes at a show and, with the popularity that cupcakes have right now, people get excited when they see them at the merch table. I sell them for \$1.00 a piece, or if you buy a CD, you get a free cupcake. I can make the cupcakes at a low cost, so I sometimes see more profit off the cupcakes than I do off my other merch. I put all the money from the cupcakes directly back into my music career fund." myspace.com/mariehinesmusic

HERE ARE SOME OTHER UNUSUAL SIDE BUSINESSES:

- **Lee Lucas**, a Los Angeles based singer-songwriter with country-rock band **NeonWest**, created the Looksy, a leather bracelet/wristband with a mirror on it for checking your look when necessary. She sells it at shows. "I came up with the idea one night before I went on stage because I was wishing for a mirror but there was not one in sight. I couldn't go to the ladies room, and I had to go on fast! I knew it was an amazing idea and I decided right then to create it." www.thelooksy.com

- **Celtic Kameron**, based in Los Angeles, plays traditional Celtic ballads with a modern twist and takes her jewelry into yet another direction. She creates traditional Celtic jewelry, which she sells nationally and internationally. www.celtickameron.com

- Los Angeles based, self-described sparkle rockers, **Karmina**, make a different sort of fashion statement. Their beanies come in many colors with sparkly thread woven through and the flower hairclips are made with real, Swarovski crystals. www.facebook.com/karminamusic

transportation systems, teamed up with Chaser Merchandising to create jackets using polyester made from 100 percent recycled plastic bottles. According to Lowe, "Maybe a year and a half ago we came across this fabric that's recycled polyester. It's actually made from recycled plastic bottles where they literally are able to take a plastic bottle and, through a series of processes, reduce it to polyester, which, of course, goes into garments. They [Radiohead] were the first that I know of in the world to tour with these garments that were made from recycled plastic bottles. They're very eco-conscious and socially conscious, so it was an opportunity for them to really carry their ethos over to touring. It's like they're really walking the walk."

